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A POLITICAL PULL.



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A Political Pull

A Comedietta in One Act

By JOHN JASPER JACKSON



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1900

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A Political Pull

CHARACTERS

JOHN CURTIS, *in politics.*

PATRICK MCMANUS, *also in politics.*

JACK WILMOT, *desirous of being in politics.*

KATE SNOWDEN, *interested in a politician.*

RUTH ASHTON, *exhibiting like interest.*

MAID.

COSTUMES MODERN.



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Jan. 11, 1900

A Political Pull.

SCENE.—*Drawing-room of MRS. SNOWDEN'S house. Doors R. and L., hung with curtains; windows at back. Very well furnished, piano, small tables, antique chairs, etc. JACK seated in front of piano, and RUTH on sofa.*

JACK. I'll bet you aunt gets him.

RUTH. Huh, that's all you know about it. He's dead in love with sister.

JACK. He is, is he? Well, he sat out three dances with aunt at the ball last night.

RUTH. I know he did. She got him in a corner of the conservatory, between a prickly pear and a century plant, sat herself in front of him, and every time he tried to escape so many stickers ran into him, that when he got out he looked as though he had the measles.

JACK. Well, do you know what the fellows at the club say? That the only way he can get away from your sister is to die, for she'll get him, if he stays above ground.

RUTH. Talk of the spiteful gossip of women. Why, last week at the Smiths' dinner party your aunt bribed the maid to change the dinner cards, so that she would sit along side of him.

JACK. That's a deliberate— (*Turns around and bangs on piano. RUTH reads book. Turning round.*) I hope aunt gets him anyway. Your sister has had two already.

RUTH. A fool and a minister. Mr. Curtis having some sense and a little wickedness, it will just make one fair man, which is about the proper ratio. An allowance of three men to one woman would make up for the stupidity women have to endure.

JACK. Mr. Curtis knows more than any ten women that ever lived. He's the smartest fellow and brightest politician in this town. If I could talk like he can, I'd be president of the United States.

RUTH. Why don't you try the presidency? I think you've tried everything else.

JACK. And whose fault is it? To please you I went in for art. I drew and daubed and scraped, and got myself covered with paint, and wore coats out at the elbow and trousers frayed at the edges, and what was the result? You laughed at my landscapes, said my portraits were libels, and cut me on the street because I looked like a tramp.

RUTH. If you'd only been an "old master" I'd have worshipped you, and I'm sure I've always kept that queer, lumpy cow you painted for me.

JACK. And then, when you had the Paderewski craze, I let my hair grow, and banged on the piano until there wasn't a sound key in it, and the family threatened to turn me out, and all the neighbors moved, and then, when I'd come and play for you, I'd work till I'd melt down my collar, and turn round, and find you'd flown.

RUTH. I tried to stay, Jack, I really did; but even your hair didn't give you a musical look; people only took you for a football player. It wouldn't have mattered if I hadn't been so fond of music.

JACK. That's right. Rub it in. But I won't stand it. I'll give up women, and go in for politics. I'll go see Mr. Curtis, and I'll marry him to aunt, if I have to chloroform him, and I'll be his private secretary, and with aunt's money and his brains and my—my—well, and me, we'll sweep the city.

RUTH. I wish you would. I'm sure it needs it.

JACK. Oh, you needn't laugh; when the cares of the nation have weighted me down, and the fate of empires has made creases in my brow, you can think of me eternally regarding you with scorn. [Exit.]

RUTH. I wish he would do something real startling, but I suppose he will be back to-morrow. If he were only like Mr. Curtis, I'd adore him. Mr. Curtis is the dearest man I know; as if he'd marry that old frump of an aunt of Jack's. Why, last night at the ball, just as we were having the loveliest time, she bore down on us with a determination that meant business. He gave one look at her, turned, and hissed in my ear, "If you desert me now, you are no gentleman." "Never, never, will I desert Mr. Micawber," said I, and I rushed forward and embraced her with an enthusiasm worthy of a better cause. She hesitated and was lost, for he slipped through the conservatory door, and was safe under Kate's protecting wing before

she could turn round. If Kate don't marry him, I'll hate her. Jack says he's awful poor, and that he needs money in the campaign, and Kate has more than she knows what to do with.

Enter KATE.

KATE. Ruth, what have you done to Jack this time? I met him in the hall, and he bade me good-bye as though he were starting for the Arctic regions.

RUTH. Nothing. Jack says Mr. Curtis will marry his aunt, and I say that rather than see him sacrificed in that way, I'll marry him myself.

KATE (*laughing*). And poor Jack was naturally indignant both on his aunt's account and his own.

RUTH. I'm sure I might do worse.

KATE. It's extremely probable.

RUTH. But I don't think I shall take him. I fear he might become president, and I haven't enough dignity for the first lady of the land. It's more in your line, Katie, my dear. I'd think it over, if I were you. [*Exit.*]

KATE. The little minx. I wonder if she guesses that I have been "thinking it over" rather seriously of late.

Enter MAID.

MAID. Mr. Patrick McManus to see you, Mrs. Snowden.

KATE. Show him right in here.

Enter MR. McMANUS.

KATE. Mr. McManus, won't you sit down? I want to have quite a long talk with you.

McMANUS. And it's plased and honored I am; and the longer the talk, the better honored and plased I'll be.

KATE. You must have been surprised to get my note asking you to call, but I think you can give me some information I want, and I have heard Mr. Curtis speak of you so often that I quite felt as though I knew you.

McM. And is it a frind of Mr. Curtis you are? A foine mon is Mr. Curtis, and a foine mon was his father before him. Mony's the pair of shoes I've cobbled for the father, and mony's the vote I've made the byes put in for the son.

KATE. That's just what I wanted to see you about, Mr. McManus. I'm so anxious to see Mr. Curtis elected. Won't you tell me all about it? Will he win?

McM. Will he win? Will a cat drink milk? Av course

he'll win. As I said to the byes, here's a foine young mon that I've known since he was knee high to a duck, who used to come in as plisint and soshuble like and stand alongside of me at me wurk—but perhaps he may have mintioned it to ye?

KATE. Of course he has. He's told me all about how his father would never have a shoe from any one else, and how he used to go down to see you, and how you taught him his first politics.

McM. And would you think of that? Him telling all that to the likes of you. To be sure I taught him all his politics. Says I, "Niver go back on the byes, and the byes 'ill niver go back on you, and all your talk about honest government and sich stuff 'ill niver hurt you a mite," says I. And iver since I retired from shoemakin' into politics, I've run his campaigns, and they've niver downed us yit, and this time we'll swape the distric' if—if —

KATE. If—what?

McM. Well, mam, ye see, it's this way. We stand for honist governmint and reform and all that, and the trouble with thim honist governmint fellows is that they don't come up with the stuff.

KATE. The stuff?

McM. The stuff. The boodle, you know. They shouts very loud for us, but they don't put their hands in their pockets. As I says to a fellow who says to me, "Go in and win"—"I'm wid ye," says I to him. "Are ye wid us tin dollars?" says he. "I'm not;" says I, thin, hot loike, "If patriotism and good governmint ain't worth tin dollars to ye, then be d——" I begs your pardon, mam.

KATE. I agree with you, Mr. McManus. I think honest government worth paying for, and I want to help pay for it in some way that will facilitate Mr. Curtis's election.

McM. That's what I say, mam. It's a disgrace to the city, mam, as I said whin they appinted a dhirty, low Oitalian as meat inspector, whin ivery one in the ward knew that me own nephew Dinnis was born ixprisly for the position. Wait till Mr. Curtis gits in, ye thieving blagards, says I, and we'll make you squirm. Did you say how much you was thinking of contributin', mam?

KATE. Well, if five hundred dollars could be used for legitimate expenses, I——

McM. If it could be used, mam? Why, I'll git ivery hall in the division, and have a truck for him to speak from at ivery

corner, and run him around to thim in a hack, and put his picture in ivery saloon, and have his record printed and sint to ivery one in the ward, together with the record of the corrupt beggar that has the impertinince to run against him. Ivery bit av it as legitimite as the day, and it'll elect him, sure. Sure, you're the good angel that'll bring destruction on the low hay-thens that are agin us.

KATE. Oh, I wish I could go to the meetings and hear him speak. What is it like?

McM. What is it loike? Oh, you should see him, mam, git up and pulverize thim with his grand manner, hammering away at thim, with all the byes shouting. He fairly sends thim flying, espeshully whin the byes git a leetle excited. It's a foine represintative he'll make, and I'm thinking that perhaps you'll be making a foine represintative's lady. And the ward'll be proud of you, mam.

KATE. Oh, Mr. McManus, you make me blush.

McM. Begorra, I'm not too old a mon yet to dance a good jig at the widdin', and whin I tell him what you've done ——

KATE. But you must promise me you'll not tell him, or not one cent will you get.

McM. Not tell him, mam, whin I'm fair burstin' wid it, why—why ——

KATE (*firmly*). Not one word, or not one cent.

McM. Well, well, give me the money, for if he's eyes in his head he won't need that to finish him, for a sweeter, bonnier ——

KATE. Fie, fie, Mr. McManus, you must have kissed the blarney stone. (*Goes to desk.*) Here's the check, and remember, he's not to know where you got it.

McM. Niver fear, I'll not tell your name. And he's as good as elected. I'll go down and start the byes, and remember, mam, Pat McManus is to get an invitation to the ceremony. [*Exit.*]

KATE. If he is elected, I will have had a part in it. I will have done something to help him on, on, on in the way that he is so surely following. I have watched him now, for —how many years, I wonder? A good many more than I like to think of now. I remember him first as a boy, talking with a boy's enthusiasm and confidence of what he would do in the world, and how he would straighten out all its tangles. Then came his first real struggle with life; somehow, I always seemed to hear of his trials and troubles, and

could see them forming and steadying him, learning from his reverses, gaining a newer and better confidence from his successes until, together, they taught him to do the work set before him with all his might—and yet, though he was my best of friends, there always seemed to be some other for whom I cared more, and I don't think that I ever really appreciated him until I found that during all the time that he had only been one among many to me, I had been something more to him. It seemed very strange at first, but now that I know how faithful and true he has been through all, and what a brave, strong, manly man he is, I am proud and glad that it is so. [Exit.

(Voice outside, "Be careful there—look out, don't knock against that hatrack.")

Enter JACK, carrying graphophone, followed by CURTIS, carrying package carefully wrapped.

CURTIS. There, put it down. Not on that wretched little table, some one will be sure to knock it over—nor that chair; would you have some one sitting down on it and ruining it?—if you put it on the piano, I'll brain you; don't you know some one will open it—put it on the floor; carefully, now, don't jar it; there. (*Walks around and inspects it; puts package alongside of it.*) Lucky thing I met you, or I'd never have gotten them both here safely.

JACK. But what is it? Will it explode? is it gunpowder?

CUR. It's worse than gunpowder. It may cause an explosion that will knock me flatter than a pancake, and it may—but never mind. What's that you've been trying to tell me about a private secretary. I can't afford to keep a young imp to bother the life out of me. A private secretary is too expensive a luxury for a poor man like me.

JACK. But then, you might marry.

CUR. (*jumping*). Marry. See here, young man, who has been talking to you about my getting married? If your a—if any one asks you if I am a marrying man, tell them that politics have been the ruination of me; that I drink, smoke, gamble, do everything bad, do you understand?

JACK. All right, I'll tell Ruth and Mrs. Snowden. I'll draw it strong, for Ruth and I were —

CUR. Oh, you were, were you? Well, you needn't mind drawing it so very strong, for you're young, and it might cor-

rupt your character. What were they saying, eh? Nothing bad, Jack, I hope.

JACK. Oh, well, not so bad. I stood up for you though, I —

CUR. That'll do. I think I'll have to take you for a secretary. Your talent for prevarication is being wasted out of politics. Jack, do you think you could do something for me?

JACK. Certainly, sir. I'll begin my duties as secretary.

CUR. Well, there's no lying needed this time. But you know Ruth, Jack. She's a fine girl, eh? you know that well enough, you young dog, you. But she's young; young and impetuous, and she's always turning up where you never expect her. Now, I have something to say to Mrs. Snowden; want to talk to her on business of a strictly private and confidential nature; you know how these business affairs are, you don't like to be interrupted, and sure as we get started, in will pop Ruth. Now, don't you think you might engage her attention for about half an hour? talk to her in the library, or on the back stairs, or out in the garden; that's a fine arbor there, Jack; so retired; don't you think you could do it?

JACK. Why, of course I'll do it for you, and I'm not at all sure it won't take some lying, but— (*Turns and knocks against package.*)

CUR. Look out! (*Grabs parcel and puts it on table.*) You wretched boy, would you be the death of me?

JACK. What under the sun is it?

CUR. Jack, I'm tempted to tell you. I thought at first that it was a master stroke of genius, but I'm beginning to weaken, I'm beginning to weaken. You're young, but they tell me that they are never too young to know about things of this kind, and I'm sure I don't know myself.

JACK. Your secretary is always ready to step into the breach, sir.

CUR. Jack, can I trust you? Can you keep a secret?

JACK. Can I? Ruth would give her eye teeth to know where I was night before last, but—try me?

CUR. I will. But I must begin at the beginning, or you won't understand. A good many years ago, when I was only a boy, I fell in love. You understand how it is? been there yourself, eh?

JACK. Yes, bad.

CUR. Knew you had, or I'd never have told you. Well, she was the sweetest, dearest, lov—but you said you'd been

there. Well, I kept trying to get my courage up to the point of coming to the point, when what do you think happened?

JACK. Married the other fellow?

CUR. Yes, by George, a big, slab-sided idiot, who hadn't sense enough to come in out of the rain, and who went around dearing her and loveying her, and slobbering over her in company, in the most sickening manner. Do you know I never knew that man to do but one decent thing in his life.

JACK. What was that?

CUR. He died. Died within two years after they were married. Just think of it; married to a woman like that, and didn't even have sense enough to keep on living. Well, then she was a widow, and there was no question of my getting up courage enough to ask her then, but of course I had to wait a decent, respectable time; I had to do that, you know.

JACK. Of course.

CUR. And I did. I waited a year and a day. I kept a pretty sharp lookout, too, and there was nobody bothered her much all that time. She was engaged most of the time on church work. So I plucked up courage and walked in as bold as brass, and who do you think I found there?

JACK. Who?

CUR. The minister, Mr. Snowden. Just engaged that morning; was so glad to have a chance to introduce him to her best friend, etc., etc. That was a blow, Jack, that was a blow.

JACK. What did you do?

CUR. I pulled myself together, and went in for politics.

JACK. The other extreme, eh?

CUR. Yes, and I was getting along pretty comfortably, not bothering much about other matters, when I had a shock.

JACK. Him?

CUR. Yes. He followed number one; or went the other way, I don't know which. But things were different with me by that time. I had learned to take time by the forelock, and Jack, the day of the funeral—I was one of the pall bearers—after the ceremony, I stepped up and said, "Kate, nothing, no, nothing, can make me forget the respect due to you and your position, but, when the proper time comes, I shall have something to say to you." She must have understood that, don't you think, Jack?

JACK. Well, I should say so; if I had your nerve —

CUR. Nerve. Jack, I have no more nerve than a field

mouse. It was desperation gave me courage to do it. And now the time has come; I feel that I must speak, and yet I can't say a word, and why, tell me why?

JACK. I'm sure I don't know. You have a reputation for generally saying what you want to say very forcibly.

CUR. True enough, and if she were only a convention or a jury, I am sure I could address her in terms that would move a stone. Why, Jack, I have described a Tammany man up for alderman in such terms that his best friend voted against him, thinking he was the reform candidate, and I have drawn a picture of a deceased city treasurer that George Washington might have been proud to own as a likeness, but when it comes to facing the most beautiful of women and telling her in suitable terms that my life's happiness depends on her favor, I can't do it, and it is the fault of those two confounded, interfering imbeciles.

JACK. Number one and number two.

CUR. Yes. Just think of it. Can I start in with "dear love" when I know that it was number one's favorite term of endearment, or "sweet angel" when I have heard number two so allude to her at a parish tea. Why, my most burning and passionate declarations leave a bad taste in my mouth when I wonder if she is comparing my style with theirs.

JACK. Sort of feel as though she might be thinking, this is very well done, but Harry went down on one knee more gracefully.

CUR. Yes, or that William was more select in his choice of words. That's just it; I couldn't face the music, but, Jack, I've solved the problem, and there's the solution.

JACK (*looking all around*). Where? where?

CUR. There. There. (*Jabbing finger at packages.*) The most wonderful invention of the age. I tell you, Jack, we are living at a wonderful time. Who could have dreamed twenty years ago that that wonderful invention would appear just in time to save my reason.

JACK. But what is it?

CUR. What is it? (*Walking around it.*) It's a boon to mankind; it's the triumph of the age; well, I can't tell you half of what it is, but you read the advertisements they'll tell you.

JACK. Ivory soap.

CUR. Nonsense. I'm coming to it; I'm coming to it. It's a graphophone.

JACK (*disgusted*). A graphophone. All this fuss about a graphophone. Why, what can it do for you?

CUR. That's my secret, boy. What will it do for me? Lay the shades of the departed for me. That's what it will do. Talk for me. Don't you understand? I locked myself in my room; no one there to laugh at me; to know whether any one had ever said the same thing before; no small sister to come bouncing in to interrupt me; no dazzling presence to overwhelm me suddenly, and make me stutter and stammer like an ass of a boy of twenty-one. No offence, no offence, Jack, you know. But just think of the magnificence of it. I said my say without a tremor, as brave as a lion, and when I got through, were my words wasted on the desert air? No, sir; there they were (*picking up package*) and here they are, hard and fast.

JACK. The cylinder. Hurrah, put her on, and let's hear her.

CUR. No, that part is not meant for you to hear, Jack. There is only one person in the world that I'd be willing to have hear that, and I won't be around when she does. Don't you see, that's another beauty of it. It can say it in my voice but without being embarrassed or thinking of numbers one and two, and it won't mind if she laughs at it for being an old fool. You don't think she'll laugh at it, Jack, do you?

JACK. Well, I don't know. It's rather queer.

CUR. That's just it. That's why I told you. It is rather queer, isn't it? Better throw the thing out, eh? I'm sure she'll laugh at it.

Enter KATE.

KATE. What is it that we are to laugh at?

CUR. A joke I was telling Jack, ha, ha, very funny, Jack, ha, ha, wasn't it, Jack? (*Aside to JACK, pointing to graphophone.*) Get it out. Get it out.

KATE. Isn't it funny enough for three?

CUR. No, not near funny enough. In fact, it's the worst joke I ever heard. What do you mean by telling such a poor joke, Jack? (*Aside.*) Get it out, get it out, I say, or she'll start it going while I'm here.

(*JACK picks it up and starts for door.*)

KATE. What's that you have there, Jack?

CUR. Oh, it's nothing, nothing at all, just a little present

Jack's brought for Ruth. Take it to her, Jack, take it to her. (*Exit JACK.*) Nice boy, Jack; always doing something nice like that.

KATE. But what was it?

CUR. What was it? I don't know. How should I know? But it must be very nice, or Jack wouldn't have brought it.

KATE. And there is something else on the table.

CUR. Don't touch it. It's Jack's; he wouldn't like it, you know. I'll give it to him. (*Calling.*) Here, Jack, Jack, you rascal, come here. It's very careless of you to leave things lying around in this way. (*JACK comes to door. CURTIS crosses over with package watching KATE. She turns away. He shoves package under chair, and makes violent motions for JACK to go, then grabs him; aside to JACK.*) Don't forget to keep Ruth out. (*Pushes him out; aloud.*) Don't do it again. (*Comes down.*) And that boy wants to be my private secretary. Wants to get into politics, he says. Hum, looks as though I might have to get out of them after the first Tuesday in November.

KATE. Don't say that. I'm sure you'll be elected, and it's the very thing I want to talk to you about.

CUR. You ought to talk to McManus. He can tell you more than I can. If I am elected, it will be due to him.

KATE. Oh, I wish I could help. (*They sit on sofa.*) It's such a grand thing to be making a brave uphill fight such as yours, for good government and right and honesty. To be a woman and have to sit with your hands folded, and just watch, is maddening.

CUR. Not help. Nonsense. They tell me that I made the best speech I ever made in my life last night; and why? because I'd just left you, and I was heartened and strengthened by your sympathy and enthusiasm for good schools and good water and good government and everything good. You are the greatest campaign speaker I know. After half an hour's talk with you I'm so sure of the innate good of humanity that I even expect common councilmen to be honest.

KATE. I know you are laughing at me. But isn't there something I can really do? I'm so full of energy and so proud of knowing such a great man, that I would be glad to stand on a corner and distribute circulars dilating on your many virtues. Why, I brag about you to all my friends.

CUR. Kate, Kate, I'm ashamed of you; to poke fun at a poor, defenceless fellow who has thrown himself on your mercy.

KATE. But I'm not altogether in fun, John. I *am* proud of you and of your work.

CUR. Are you, Kate, are you? Do you really mean it? If you only knew what that meant to me, you wouldn't joke about it.

KATE. Well, then, I won't. I do mean it, and I want you to let me prove it by doing something for your work. I want to contribute five hundred dollars to the campaign fund.

CUR. Kate, I'm sorry, but I can't do it. I tell you frankly, it would be a help; you know I'm not rich, but I can't let my friends pay my bills. I am proud and glad to say that I have friends who would let me have all I need for the asking; and, in fact, it has been offered to me before, without the asking, but from a source that made it impossible for me to accept.

KATE. I suppose you think it would have been looked on as a bribe.

CUR. Well, something of that kind. (*Aside.*) I would probably have been uncle to Jack by this time if I had taken it from her.

KATE. But in taking it from me, there would be nothing of the kind. Come. You needn't even see it; I'll send it to McManus.

CUR. Get thee behind me, Satan. No, no, it can't be done, Kate. But don't think that I don't appreciate it. I've always known that no man ever had a better, truer, dearer friend than you have been to me. Why, for years, every thought —

Enter JACK and RUTH quickly.

RUTH. Mr. Curtis, here's a letter for you, marked important.

JACK (*aside*). I did my best, but I couldn't hold her in another minute.

RUTH. And Mr. Curtis, Jack says you have the records for the graphophone. Where are they?

CUR. They're on the road. Never fear, they'll get here. A dozen good ones. "Ta ra ra boom de ay" and "A Hot Time," etc. (*Aside.*) Another ten dollars that might have gone for campaign expenses. I'll break that boy's neck. (*Opens letter.*)

KATE (*to RUTH*). If you don't take Jack out of here this instant, miss, I'll put you on bread and water for a week.

RUTH (*tossing her head*). Come on, Jack, I guess we're

not wanted around here. Kate's too much taken up with politics. [*Exit with JACK.*]

CUR. (*reads letter and crushes it up in hand; aside*). That confounded aunt of Jack's has sent the money she offered me, to McManus.

KATE (*aside*). I wonder if it is from Mr. McManus; I'm afraid he'll be dreadfully angry about the five hundred dollars. (*Aloud.*) I hope your letter didn't contain bad news. You don't seem pleased.

CUR. Oh, but I am. At least, I should be; McManus says I'm as good as elected.

KATE. I'm so glad. What has happened?

CUR. Oh, Mac has gotten some money, and hired halls and brass bands and things, and is making things rotate generally.

KATE (*cautiously*). He doesn't say where he got it, does he?

CUR. Of course not. Of course not. Why should he? there's no reason he should. (*Aside.*) When Kate finds out that it was that woman's money elected me, I'm done for.

KATE (*aside*). He might at least look as though he were glad he had it. (*Aloud.*) Don't give any idea who it was?

CUR. Well, not much. He says it was an angel. (*Aside.*) No hopes of keeping it dark; it's probably all over the ward by this time.

KATE. Well, I must say, you don't seem very enthusiastic. Don't you think you might at least say you are obliged to her?

CUR. That's just like a woman. To think all angels must be females. How do you know it's not a male angel? Anyway, I wish she had gone on attending to her heavenly affairs, and left terrestrial ones to take care of themselves.

KATE (*getting angry*). I'm disappointed in you, John. How ungrateful you are. She was trying to do you a favor.

CUR. (*aside*). Good gracious, she knows all about it. I believe the old vixen must have told her she was going to send it. (*Aloud.*) That's the way with these well meaning people, they're always presuming, and —

KATE. Presuming. John Curtis, let me tell you that if the person who sent it hadn't thought that you would be glad to take it from her, and wanted to help you, which is more than you deserve, she'd never have thought of sending it.

CUR. (*aside*). I knew she knew it. No wonder she's angry after I refused *her* money. (*Aloud.*) But I tell you I gave

her no reason to think I would take it from her. Do you mean to tell me that after what I said to you about it, any one in their sane senses could think that I would accept their money?

KATE (*half crying*). Well, I hope no one will ever try to do anything for you again as long as you live, and I hate you, and I'll never speak to you again. [*Exit.*]

CUR. That settles it. A nice mess I've made of things. Refused downright to take Kate's money, and now she believes that I encouraged that—angel, as Mac says, to send it to me. And I've got to be grateful for it. No, I'll be hanged if I will. I'll go out and get five hundred dollars, if I have to rob a bank or pawn my campaign badges, and I'll pay it back; and then, I'll take it out on the ward. I'll go down there and raise such particular Cain that they will think Bill Bryan or Sockless Jerry Simpson has struck town. Yes, I'm done with women. I don't understand them. Now why should Kate want me to be grateful to another woman, anyhow? Well, politics are the thing, and I understand Mac, anyhow. If I can't *speak* to her, I'll make her *hear* of me. I'll make a name for myself that—that—confound the name, what do I care for any name, unless it's her name. [*Exit.*]

Enter JACK and RUTH.

RUTH. I wonder why Mr. Curtis left so suddenly. I wanted to ask him about those things for the graphophone.

JACK. It's my private opinion that you'll get those records when the cows come home. (*Goes over and looks under chair.*) By Jupiter, he's left it.

RUTH. What?

JACK. His proposal. (*Unwraps it.*)

RUTH. Jack, it isn't. Honor bright? Let's look at it.

JACK. But I say, something must be done. He hasn't given it to her. His courage must have failed at the last minute. It's a shame.

RUTH. Jack, our finding it is a dispensation of providence. We'll do it for him. Quick, get the machine. (*They get it and put record on.*) There, now to send sister in to hear it.

JACK. I wonder what he says. Don't you think we might just start it?

RUTH. Jack, I'm ashamed of you. Not one word. But, oh, I'm afraid to look at it, for fear I should. Quick, quick, let's take ourselves out of the way of temptation. I don't know how long my virtue will hold out. You carry it into

the next room, so no one will interrupt her, and I'll call her. But remember, I'm watching you. (JACK carries graphophone out, and she goes to other door and calls.) Kate, Kate. (Runs quickly out of other door and brings Jack in by his ear.)

Enter KATE.

RUTH. Kate, there's a surprise for you in the next room.

JACK. It's altogether the jolliest thing I ever heard. (Aside.) I'm a villain to go back on aunt in this way.

RUTH. Do hurry and hear it, Kate.

JACK. And we'll stay outside and watch.

RUTH. No one will come. You just turn the button, you know.

JACK. It's on the table, and we don't know anything about it, you know. (Both run off.)

KATE. What are those children up to now? Some joke about their graphophone, I suppose. Just at present I can't say I feel much like joking. Poor John. I was cross with him, but then he deserved it. To speak so about me. To be sure he didn't know it was me, but he ought to have guessed, and he was very rude. And I'll be very severe with him, when he comes back—when he comes back; but if he doesn't come; of course, he'll come. It would be absurd of him not to come—but perhaps I'd better not be *too* severe.

(JACK and RUTH poke their heads through doorway.)

RUTH. Not gone yet, sister?

JACK. Really, it's too good to keep, Mrs. Snowden.

KATE. Yes, yes, I'm going. (Heads withdrawn; rising.) Blessed children; all their worries and troubles are ahead of them. Oh, deary me; no, no, I don't think I'll be really hard on John—when he comes back to me. [Exit.

(Heads poked out again.)

JACK. Has she gone?

RUTH. Yes; come right away, Jack; we might hear something, and it would be downright wicked. (Heads disappear.)

Enter CURTIS, hurriedly.

CUR. By George, I'm all in a cold perspiration. (During speech looks all over room, under chairs, tables, etc.) I'd gone almost a mile before I thought of it, and the rate at which I came back marks me as a suspicious character for life.

(*Looks under chair.*) I'd swear I put it under that chair. (*Searches further.*) At 19th Street, I was sure a policeman would stop me. (*Peers back of piano.*) If he had, I'd have knocked him down. Ah, there it is. No, it's gone. (*Sinks into chair.*) Well, that's the last straw. I suppose it's in the kitchen, being ground out before the butler, or Ruth is exhibiting it before a select circle of friends; or Jack—Jack knew, he may have hidden it in the next room. I wonder if there is any one there to prevent my looking for it. (*Cautiously peeps through curtain.*) Kate, by Jove, and looking as bonny as a picture. How could I ever expect such a woman to love me? I'll go down on my knees and beg her pardon; call myself a brute, a beast, and abuse myself so, that in very decency she'll have to take my part. Dear girl, she can't stop my loving her, even if she won't let me cherish and protect her. I wonder what she's doing. (*Looks.*) What? What's that in front of her? the graphophone, with the record on it. Stop her. Stop her, somebody; stop her, quick; shall I—no, let her hear it; I'm not ashamed of it. It will show her that she is all the world to me, and then she will understand how I felt about the money. (*Looks again, and then draws back.*) Have I the right? Yes, I think a man certainly has the right to be present at his own proposal. There, it starts; ah, I know so well what it is saying—Kate, there is something that I have been longing to say to you for years; that has been in my heart since boyhood. Will she laugh at it, I wonder? Or be angry? Why, she's on her knees in front of it; listening as though she cared. It can't be true. Oh, if I only knew how far it had gotten. I can't endure it, to let a soulless machine go on with its endless grinding, when I am longing to be with her, pouring out the tenderness and devotion that fills my heart, as I know I can now. (*Tears aside curtain.*) Kate, Kate, don't listen to that; listen to me. [*Exit.*]

(*JACK's and RUTH's heads appear again.*)

RUTH. Jack, I'm sure I heard some one.

JACK. Nonsense. It was just my heart beating, don't you hear it, pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat. (*They come in.*) Ruth, do you know, I feel real guilty about going back on aunt in this way.

RUTH. Don't worry. She knows that there are as good fish in the sea as have ever been caught, and she's fond of fishing. I wonder if Kate has heard it all yet?

JACK. I don't know, and I don't care. I know something

better than listening to a dead, heartless graphophone. (*Arranges two chairs with their backs to the audience.*) There, you come over here, and sit right close, and I'll tell you all about my political career. (*They sit.*)

RUTH (*with a sigh of contentment*). Jack, do you know, I don't really mind you're not being artistic, for you're *such* a nice boy, Jack.

Enter CURTIS with his arm around KATE.

CUR. And when I'm elected, we'll go to Washington, and you will outshine them all.

KATE. And you've forgiven me for being so horrid to you.

CUR. Horrid! Why, Kate, you're the dear —

(*JACK'S and RUTH'S heads pop up over back of chairs.*)

JACK. A-hem!

RUTH. We're here, sister.

CUR. (*laughing*). You blessed children, you don't think we *mind* you, do you? Why, Paradise is just full of such cherubs as you.

JACK (*to RUTH*). Hum! Both departedds must be having a warm time, as I don't see any place for them in Paradise.

Enter McMANUS, highly excited.

McM. Here they come, mam. Here they come, Mr. Curtis. (*Rushes to window.*)

JACK. } Who? What? (*Rush to other window.*)
RUTH. }

McM. The byes. Don't you hear the band? (*Band and commotion heard outside.*) Hear them shout. (*Coming down.*) Didn't I tell you things would begin to come our way, mam?

KATE. But you haven't told them that I —

McM. Niver fear. Divil a word. I just marched them around to escort Mr. Curtis to the meeting, and to see your pretty face.

RUTH (*at window with JACK*). Look at the torches.

JACK. And the high hats.

RUTH. And the sashes.

JACK. They're calling for you, Mr. Curtis.

McM. Just listen to the babies. (*Drags CURTIS to other window. Swings hat around head.*) Hurra'! Hurra'!

CUR. Come look at them, Kate. (*Bows and waves hand at window.*)

McM. (*rushes back and leads KATE to window*). Sure, all the byes are fond of a pretty face. (*Comes down again.*) Bless her bright eyes, a weddin' would be worth fifty votes.

RUTH. Oh, they're starting.

McM. What? (*Rushing out.*) Stop! Whoa! Hi!
[*Exit.*]

JACK. Look at the old duck with the wooden leg, dancing a can-can.

RUTH. Look. Look at him trying to set fire to the cross-eyed man's whiskers.

CUR. There's Mac.

KATE. Why, he's making them an oration.

CUR. They're all looking at you, Kate. They're cheering you. Lord only knows what he's told them.

KATE. I don't care. I'll love them all, if they'll only elect you.

RUTH. Just look at him. Look at him. He's settled the wooden legged one. He's getting them into line. See him bang them around. (*Throwing herself on JACK.*) Oh, I could just hug him.

JACK. Here. Hold on; I want to be embraced for myself alone. Not for McManus.

Enter McMANUS.

McM. (*rushing in*). Come along, Mr. Curtis. Come along, young mon. You look as though you had a good pair of lungs.

CUR. All ready. Good-bye, Kate, good-bye. I'll be back.

KATE. Soon, please? And, oh, speak for me, too.

JACK. Secretary's ready, sir.

RUTH. Good-bye, Jack, good-bye. Look out for the wooden legged man.

McM. There goes the band. Come on.

ALL. Good-bye. Good-bye. [*All exeunt.*]

(*KATE and RUTH rush to windows. Loud cheer from street. They wave handkerchiefs. Band grows fainter; they turn toward each other.*)

CURTAIN.

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ACT I.—Caleb's home. Social ambitions. "Borrying." Nan, the mascotte. The cut finger. "If mother should see us." Laying down the law. An unwelcome return. A bitter disappointment. Her husband. "You have not seen the last of me!" Deacon Smartweed and the "wider." The see-saw. The accident. "What'll the parson say?" An estrangement. Flood's return. The meeting. "That blow is enough." The murder.

ACT II.—In New York. Lawyer *vs.* doctor. The speculator. The life of Wall street. The mascotte. The mysterious chamber. "The man is mad." Nan and the dude. The real man. In society. Prompting Cupid. A "duck" and a "quack." Eavesdropping. An understanding. A financial crisis. The wolf in sheep's clothing. The cat's out. Breakers ahead.

ACT III.—The Deacon's visit. A changed wife. Golden Queen stock. The mascotte's warning. The dude and the deacon. "Dunno's I ever saw anythin' like that before." The lantern. "Some garden sass for Sister Baldwin." The red Indian. The hour of trouble. Sacrificing her child. The black door. The big chief and the butler. A fateful letter. His revenge. A fearful price. A ruined man. Nan to the rescue. Saved.

ACT IV.—Back in the country. A dude sportsman. "A weglar wuffian." A trial shot. "Gweat Motheth! the hat wath on a manth head." The Deacon's experiences. Frackett's goat. The widow's rescue. Butted into matrimony. Flood's escape. A false report. A blessing in disguise. The secret of the room. Jimsy again. Hunted down. The arrest. Nan's enlightenment. For better or for worse. "What'll the parson say?"

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ACT II.—At the picnic. The fire-eater takes water. Scarcely a suicide. A desperate man. An extempore comedy. "Great Cæsar! what a scrape!" A double misunderstanding. A bothered burglar. "The lynx-eyed ferret of justice." A wrong scent. A humorous alliance. Jim and the pie. The tramp. "I can't—I've got my pants off!" The murderous Count. Explanations. Forcing her hand. Married by a burglar. "The never-beaten detective." The wrong man.

ACT III.—Sunrise in the barn-yard. On guard. Asleep at his post. "You have ruined our plans." A howlin' toothache. A set-back for the sleuth-hound. The parson himself again. Highway robbery. The advantages of being deaf. "Don't tell me my child is married to a nigger!" The last of the Count. "The blow it near killed father." Facing it out. Bliss and rapture. Slippery Gibbs. "Bless you, my children, bless you."

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